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175 the Rejang and Igan Rivers at Durin, Salim, Assan, Penasu, Ensurai and
177 Bukit Lan. Gradually, as Government was able to give more protection and a greater degree of security in rural areas, Chinese shopkeepers penetrated the tributaries, in some cases going as far up as the last longhouse, farming and growing rubber, fruit and vegetables as well as acting as middlemen in the rural trade.[56]

000 The Foochow domination of trade and commerce in the Sibu District is due in part to their overwhelming members. As indicated in Table 9 on the following page, by 1947, their total number in both rural and urban areas was almost three times that of all other Chinese. In the rural area, the Foochows were six times as numerous as the next largest group, the Cantonese. And in the urban area, they were more than twice as many as the Hokkien, second to them in numbers.

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[56] The recent increase in terrorism and the general insecurity that has accompanied it has prompted the movement of rural residents, especially Chinese, into Sibu. Between the time when the First and Second Stages of the 1970 Census were taken in the Sibu Rural District, almost 1,800 Chinese moved from the rural areas into Sibu. The First Stage showed a total of 32,478 Chinese in the Sibu Rural District. The Second Stage, taken four months later, showed only 30,683. A majority of these people moved into Sibu, according to Urban District Council and Education Department officials, who have been concerned with their placement in work and their children in schools. At the same time, and unrelated to this, the rise of a new image and ethnic consciousness among Ibans has resulted in the supplanting of Chinese by Iban shopkeepers in several areas; e.g., Ulu Durin Kiba.

[186]

582 returned to China often as not left their Iban wives behind. There is little information available to assess the stability of marriages in which the man stayed on in Sarawak. There are a number of Chinese-Iban couples in both the rural and urban areas, including some of the more [851] notable citizens of Sibu. Generally, children of such marriages are identified with the ethnic group of the father.

From the time of the Second Rajah onward, European officers and company employees commonly took wives from among local women. Again, some of these unions were enduring, others lasted only for the time of the tour of the European. A number of such officers still are held in high regard for the provisions that they made for their wives and [851] for their children's education. Even though the children often took the father's surname, in a majority of cases they stayed in Sarawak, or returned to Sarawak following their study abroad.

851 582 Children of inter-ethnic marriages (penakan) are readily accepted in the pluralistic society of Sibu. Marriages with Chinese and Caucasians are considered to be hypergamous by Ibans, and children tend to identify with the group offering maximum opportunity for security, acceptance and [186] exploitation. Because of a more conservative and critical attitude towards penakan in some longhouse communities, these children seek the first opportunity to move into the more liberal pasar society, which

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offers acceptance with less attention to ethnic background, and where statuses are achieved by performance and production rather than ascribed according to relative grading of parental group identification.

4. Political Parties[70]

The formation of political parties in Sarawak is a relatively late development, the first being formed in 1959. From the very beginning, most parties, with the exception of the Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA), have included members of several ethnic groups, and have aimed at the development of an inter-racial constituency. Given the short history of such formal political activity, it is not surprising that there are few ideological differences between the parties and that membership is recruited not so much on the basic of political philosophy as the rewards and interests offered by a party.[71]

At present, the ruling Alliance is comprised of members from each of the major local groups: Malay, Chinese and Iban. The formation of Malaysia in 1963 and the recent political coup by the very astute Chief Minister, Abdul Rahman Yaku'ub, has resulted in a new shuffle of the ethnic deck, with the Malays, who lost power through the 1946 cession, in a most favored position. The strength of Iban leaders, to which we have referred already, and their inability to work together

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[70] For a thorough discussion see Leigh, 1970.

[71] The local situation has many features that are similar to those in the Philippines as described by Lande, 1965.

Opposite").[7] After a stay in Sebayan, highlighted by eating, drinking and revelling with members of the opposite sex to the heart's content, the soul then proceeds on a journey through several river networks, the most important being Mandai Mati ("Death"), Mandai Awai ("Suffering"), and, finally to Mandai Jenoh ("Peace") where the soul is changed into padi-nourishing dew, the fitting end for the Iban life.

Further, not all rice is equally valuable. Each bilik possesses padi pun or a special strain of rice ritually defined as sacred rice.[8] The planting of the padi pun takes priority over the planting of any other strain, in planting wet rice as well as hill rice.[9] Although some degree of the reverence shown the padi pun as described by Freeman (1955: 154-155) still exists among the Ibans in the Sibu District, yet they are much more casual in their handling and treatment of it than the Sut Ibans.

Distinctions between Iban rice and other varieties are frequently pointed out, in favor of the former. Kami enda' kala' makai beras China ("We never ate Chinese rice"), boasted Embuas anak Imbs, a notoriously successful farmer. On the inferior qualities of non-Iban rice, Indai

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[7] Afterworld, where all is exactly reversed from this life.

[8] Any of the more than three dozen sub-species of rice can be claimed as padi pun, depending upon each family's lore.

[9] Among the more than 20,000 Ibans who have become Christians this ritual is accompanied with a planting of a wooden cross as well.

186 243 262 [829] Anyau said, Mula ia aku makai berau China asai ka mutah ("The first time I ate Chinese rice, I felt like vomiting"). The man who is lucky enough to grow enough rice so that he never is without and never has to buy is clearly considered a cut above the man who is not so successful.

243 183 That rice farming is not merely an economic activity but also a ritual of powerful tradition is abundantly apparent in the cases of men and women who farm at a loss, not because they have to, but because it "is the way of our ancestors" (endang jalai aki ini kami bansa Iban). Umbing owns a wooden, Chinese carpenter-built house at the Tenth Mile Oya Road. In 1969-70, he returned to the area of his longhouse at Sungai Pa to grow rice, even though he is largely self-sufficient in terms of his needs. According to reckoning of the expenses he put out in travel, seed, labor and fertilizer, and the rice he harvested, he lost an estimated M$50 on the farming venture. Asked why he farmed at a loss, when otherwise he is an astute businessman, Umbing's answer was essentially that given above, and repeated by many Ibans: Endang jalai pengidup kami bansa Iban.

2. The Farming Year

243 621 [221] The beginning of the farming year is set by the annual meeting called by the tuai rumah of all the tuai bilik in his house, for the purpose of discussing where each family will farm during the next year. This permits the families involved to state where they will farm, and to

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186 From birth to death, the Iban is impressed with his ethnic identity vis-a-vis other ethnic groups. Through legends and myths, told on the longhouse ruai or broadcast over Radio Malaysia, he is made aware of the great crowd of ancestral witnesses who surround him, and to whom he owes his life. Although the group of which he immediately is aware may be limited to his longhouse community, he readily identifies with fellow Ibans of other districts and divisions through sharing a common language, adat and corpus of beliefs. According to his need and convenience, the kinship system may be manipulated to include or exclude fellow Ibans.

181 In the pluralistic state of Sarawak, the Iban are the most aggressive of the indigenous people. This characteristic of aggression is, at least in part, a reflection of the confidence which the Iban feel in their self-identity. Casual observers have commented on the strength of the Iban, the pride of the individual in himself and in his ethnic group. And Freeman, through intense observation, described them as "untrammelled individualists, aggressive and proud in demeanour."

195 [181] The strong sense of personal and corporate indentity of the Ibans has been one of the factors which has helped them become the most numerous and most powerful of the indigenous people. During their invasion of

167 of rubber may vacillate; food may or may not be available. But in the
177 pasar, there is no shortage of food and there are ways to get money with
829 which to buy it.

Secondary reasons given for preference of life in the pasar are
[758] related to medical facilities and education. Several persons said that the unhygienic conditions of the longhouse and the lack of medical aid
[871] influenced their decisions to live in the pasar. Others said that the standard of education in rural schools is of such poor quality that the only chance for children is to get them into urban schools, beginning preferably at the kindergarten level.

Interestingly, many of the long-time residents of Sibu stated
[186] their preference for life in the longhouse. In several examples of informants saying one thing but doing another, men who have lived in Sibu for more than 20 years maintain that the only place where young people can become "true Ibans" is in the longhouse. A majority (43) of those who chose rural life are in the Sarawak Rangers. They indicated that they would serve out their time with the Rangers and then retire on pension to their longhouse communities. Only time will tell whether they return to the longhouse or continue to live in Sibu or some other pasar.

159 We now will consider in turn the examples of three residents of
167 Sibu, who are representative of the larger population of Ibans. In the
177 case of the last two, pseudonyms are used. These individuals personify many of the patterns of behavior and characteristics of the urbanizing Ibans and, it is hoped, will help to give more concreteness to elements